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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Letter dated 3 October 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the Declaration of Santiago on Media Development and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Plan of Action adopted at the Seminar held by the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Santiago, Chile, from 2 to 6 May 1994.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 80.

(Signed) Juan SOMAVIA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX I

[Original: English and Spanish]

Declaration of Santiago on Media Development and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean

We the participants in the United Nations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/United Nations Development Programme Seminar on Media Development and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, Chile, from 2 to 6 May 1994,

Recalling article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a/ which states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers",

Recalling the American Convention on Human Rights (Pacto de San José de Costa Rica),

Recalling General Assembly resolution 59 (I) of 14 December 1946, stating that freedom of information is a fundamental human right, and General Assembly resolution 46/76 A of 11 December 1990 on information in the service of humanity,

Recalling resolution 104, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its twenty-fifth session, in 1989, in which the main focus is the promotion of "the free flow of ideas by word and image at international as well as national levels",

Recalling resolution 4.3 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-sixth session, in 1991, which recognizes that a free, pluralistic and independent press is an essential component of any democratic society and which endorses the Declaration adopted by the participants at the United Nations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May 1994, b/

Recalling General Assembly resolution 48/133 of 20 December 1993, on the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, 1993,

Recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, c/

Stressing the growing role of the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, whose Intergovernmental Council decided, at its February 1992 session, to give priority to projects which seek to reinforce independent and pluralistic media,

Noting with appreciation the statement made by the representative of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations, the statement made by the Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the statement made by the representative of the United Nations Development Programme, at the opening of the Seminar,

Noting with satisfaction that the holding of the Seminar coincided with the first observance of World Press Freedom Day, established by General Assembly decision of 20 December 1993, d/

Noting with appreciation the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, delivered on his behalf by the representative of the Department of Public Information, the message on the occasion of the Day by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization delivered on his behalf by the Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics, statement made by the President of the Republic of Chile and the statement made by the Mayor of the City of Santiago at the dedication ceremony of the International Square of Freedom of the Press, in Santiago, on 3 May 1994, World Press Freedom Day,

Expressing our gratitude to the Government and people of Chile for their kind hospitality, which facilitated the success of the Seminar,

Expressing our gratitude to the Mayor and people of Santiago for dedicating on 3 May 1994, World Press Freedom Day, a square, in Santiago, to press freedom,

Expressing our since appreciation to the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Development Programme for organizing the Seminar,

Expressing also our sincere appreciation to all the intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations which contributed to the effort of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Development Programme to organize the Seminar,

Aware that peace, development and democracy are intimately interlinked, and recognizing that the Latin American and Caribbean media, amongst the most dynamic in the world, have played a major role in favour of peace, democracy and world economic and social development,

Express our full support for, and total commitment to, the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Windhoek, and acknowledge its importance as a milestone in the struggle for free, independent and pluralistic print and broadcast media in all regions of the world.

Regarding the specific situation prevailing in Latin America and the Caribbean, where there exist highly developed print and electronic media of which some are known world wide, and small and community media, including those recently established, with very limited means, in particular in rural and marginalized urban areas,

We declare that:

1. Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of our democracies. Democracy is a prerequisite for peace and development within and between our countries. Freedom of the press is a key and indivisible part of the freedom of expression.

2. All States of the region must be encouraged to provide constitutional guaranties for freedom of expression, freedom of the press for all forms of media, freedom of association and freedom for media trade unions.

3. Respect for pluralism, cultural, language and gender diversity should be a fundamental factor in our democratic societies and should be reflected through all the media.

4. We strongly condemn the fact that journalists, publishers and broadcasters are still victims of repression, threats, aggression, murder, arrest, detention and abduction for which the criminals, in many cases, enjoy impunity. They are also restricted by economic and political pressures such as censorship; restrictions on newsprint and other professional equipment and material; licensing systems and abusive controls which limit the opportunity to publish or broadcast; travel or visa denials and restrictions which prevent the free movement of journalists; limitations on the free flow of news and information; and restrictions on the circulation of periodicals within countries and across national borders.

5. Our aim is to promote the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines, videos, radio and television stations reflecting the widest possible range of opinion in the community.

6. State authorities should make available in a timely and reasonable manner the information generated by the public sector.

7. No journalist should be forced to reveal his or her sources of information.

8. In accordance with the fundamental rights of expression and association as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a/ the access to and the practice of journalism must be free, and not limited by any means.

9. There is an urgent need to increase training and educational programmes for journalists and other media practitioners with a view to improving their professional standards.

10. We call on the General Assembly of the United Nations to create a "World Press Freedom Prize", to be awarded annually, to honour individuals, organizations or institutions that have contributed significantly to the advancement of freedom of information, irrespective of the medium, print or electronic. The jury shall be appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and shall be composed of distinguished personalities

recognized and respected for their dedication to the cause of freedom of the press and for their internationally recognized ethical standing.

Notes

a/ Resolution 217 A (III).

b/ A/SPC/47/4.

c/ Resolution 34/180, annex.

d/ Decision 48/432.

ANNEX II

Plan of Action

The Plan of Action adopted by the Seminar proposes the following measures:

1. Promotion of community media in rural, indigenous and marginal urban areas

(a) Taking into account the increasing importance of community media in the democratic process in the region, to request the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the assistance of professional organizations and research institutions, to survey the current situation of community media concerning legislation, frequencies, power limitations and advertising restrictions, with a view to making recommendations for the consideration of the Governments concerned.

(b) To request the International Programme for the Development of Communication of UNESCO (IPDC) and donor agencies to support projects for the creation of new community media, both print and broadcast, and projects aimed at strengthening existing community media in accordance with international norms, especially those media serving women, youth, indigenous populations and minorities.

(c) To call upon professional organizations and the regional and national representatives of international organizations involved in community development issues, to encourage community media to exchange information among themselves and with other media. In so doing, they will contribute to the development of communication networks.

2. Training

(a) To promote and support the training of journalists, broadcasters and other media professionals, especially those working in rural and marginal urban areas. To this end the curricula should include the legal, technological, managerial, marketing, advertising, gender and cultural aspects of the media.

(b) To recommend to media organizations in the region (journalists, broadcasters and publishers), to hold a meeting with a view to harmonizing their training and educational programmes and working methods, and to adapting them to new technologies, in collaboration if necessary with UNESCO.

(c) To encourage the reading of both community and national newspapers in school as learning tools, in order to enable children to understand the value of the free press and to learn to exercise their judgement. Further, to include in the curriculum of primary education the issue of freedom of the press.

(d) To ask UNESCO to convene, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies, seminars to analyse the status and the participation of women in the media.

3. Free press and the safety of journalists

(a) To extend the number of monitoring centres in the Latin American and the Caribbean region and to link them with the existing International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) Action Alert Network, using joint resources of professional national and international organizations with assistance from UNESCO.

(b) In addition to monitoring aggression against journalists, to request IFEX to investigate the possibility of including in the monitoring system serious cases of visa rejection and limited movement of journalists and restrictions on the free flow of information in the region, among other press freedom issues.

(c) To request UNESCO to participate, together with professional organizations, in promoting at different levels of society awareness of the right of journalists to exercise their profession safely.

4. Equipment and technology

(a) To request UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union, together with professional organizations, to advise small media, especially in rural and marginal urban areas, on available technology optimal for their needs.

(b) To ask the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme and the Programme of General Information, all three of UNESCO, to support the creation of networks, documentation centres and databases in the Latin American and Caribbean countries in order for journalists and broadcasters to have access to international information, as well as manuals, texts, compact discs (CD ROM) and other kinds of training material.

5. Research

(a) To encourage media organizations, universities, research institutions and governmental and intergovernmental agencies to conduct research on the impact of communication technology development on indigenous communities, with a view to maintaining their cultural identity.

(b) To recommend that UNESCO, in cooperation with professional organizations, conduct a comparative study of legislation affecting media.